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ADDRESS

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OF

THE REV. WILLIAM NEWELL,

AS PASTOR OF THE

FIRST PARISH IN CAMBRIDGE,

MAY 19, 1830.

BY ALEXANDER YOUNG,

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ON CHURCH GREEN, BOSTON.

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ADDRESS.

THE solemn services are ended, by which our young brother has been inducted into the sacred office, and invested with the charge of the spiritual interests of this church and congregation. You, my friends, have a new pastor, and to him is committed for the first time the care of a Christian flock. The connexion thus formed is of a most serious and interesting nature ;—serious, from its permanency ; for it is a connexion which death alone, or some event no less to be deplored, shall sever ;—more serious, from the momentous consequences that may result from the faithful or ill discharge of this holy trust, not only to him and to each one of you, but to the great cause of Christian truth and virtue. It is interesting, from the new relations it involves, and the mutual duties it creates ;—interesting to you, who thus intrust to youthful hands the keeping of your dearest interests, the direction of your public devotions, and the moral and religious instruction of yourselves and your children ;—peculiarly interesting to your pastor. This day is to him a most eventful one. It marks an incident in his life, than which, long and diversified as that life may be, it can bring with it none more important or affecting. He has been set apart and ordained, according to the simple and impressive rites adopted by our forefathers, to dispense unto you the words of eternal life ; to be your religious teacher, your spiritual guide, your counsellor, your comforter, your friend. The hands of venerable men, the fathers of our churches, have been

laid upon him, in imitation of patriarchal and apostolic usage, whilst the fervent prayer of this worshipping assembly was offered up, invoking the blessing of Almighty God upon his opening labors. The solemn Charge has urged upon him the importance and obligation of his pastoral duties, and warned and conjured him to be a faithful and devoted minister of Jesus Christ. And lastly the Right Hand of Fellowship has been extended to him, in behalf of his brethren, to welcome him to all the cares, the trials, the satisfactions of the Christian ministry. The vows of Heaven are now upon him, and henceforth he is to put forth his arm to bear the ark of God.

Brethren, whilst we congratulate you and your minister on the fulfilment of your mutual wishes by the transactions of this day, and on the bright prospects that are opening before you, you will permit us, in the spirit of Christian friendship, to remind you of the duties which this connexion implies and imposes. The duties of your minister have been set before him plainly and solemnly. Why should not yours? What a delicate sense of propriety might prevent him from saying at any time, the present occasion requires his brethren to say in his behalf. Receive, then, this Address, not simply as my counsel, but as the solemn and affectionate exhortation of the pastors and delegates of these churches ; and let their collected wisdom and experience, if they do not add weight and authority to my words, at least obtain for them a favorable and candid hearing. I would speak respectfully, but frankly. I would not be negligent to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance of these things, though ye already know them, and, as I trust, are well established in them. "I speak as to wise men ; judge ye what I say."

It is unquestionably the duty of a Society, to give their constant and regular attendance on the public services of their minister. This is a duty which they owe to him, to themselves, and to their God. Divine Providence has favored them with the means of moral and religious improvement in the ministration of the word and ordinances of the Gospel.

They cannot, without incurring guilt and danger, neglect the employment of these means. By the invitation which you have given our brother to become your religious teacher, you have entered into a tacit engagement to listen to his instructions. Without such an implied assurance on your part, he never would have consented to become your minister. He supposes that you have settled him to preach, not to bare walls and empty pews, but to yourselves and your assembled families. So he understands the contract, and you are aware that he so understands it. Let it, then, be well pondered this day, and henceforth remembered, that if it is his duty to be in the church on every returning sabbath to preach, it is no less your duty to be there to hear. So long as he is faithful to his trust, your obligation continues in full force. You would complain loudly, and justly too, were he ever to absent himself, without adequate reason; were you to come hither, and find the church closed, and no provision made for the weekly worship. Will he not have just as much right to complain of you, should you ever needlessly absent yourselves from the stated services of the Lord's day? Sickness is the only thing that will prevent him from discharging regularly his official duties; nay, he will sometimes appear in the pulpit sick in body and sick at heart, when, were he to consult merely his own convenience or feelings, he would be in his chamber, or on his bed. Sickness, or some circumstance no less urgent, is the only thing that you should permit to detain you from public worship.

Consider, too, my friends, that your pastor is a man, and has all the sensibility of a man. Now what, I would ask, can be more discouraging, or more wounding to his feelings, than the suspicion, which the sight of your vacant seats will inevitably create, that his labors are slighted or despised. I know that the minister of Christ, who is conscious of diligence and fidelity, should have firmness enough to go on, undisturbed by this apparent neglect, adopting the language of the Apostle, "None of these things move me." Yet how much would he be cheered in his duty, how much would his labors be lightened, by

the belief, which your constant presence here will assuredly inspire, that they are appreciated by the people of his charge. I trust that none of you will ever give occasion to your minister to complain of your neglect in this particular ; but that each sabbath, as it brings round its still and quiet satisfactions, will find you with your families gathered in this holy place. Never forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, on the frivolous pretences that it is too cold or too hot, too dusty or too damp, pretences that are seldom alleged when the matter in hand is an excursion of pleasure, or any secular engagement. O, say not, My garment is not new enough ;—A cloud is rising, and the wind blows portentously ;—I can worship at home, and have no need of instruction ;—I have reserved my illness for to-day ;—I have concerns to adjust, correspondents to answer, an entertainment to provide, and friends to receive. Whoever can seriously proffer such excuses as these, shows how little he regards the invitation of the Saviour, who tells us, “ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

And here, brethren, I would particularly warn you against the practice, prevalent in some places, especially in our cities and larger towns, of deserting the afternoon services of the Lord’s day. By many this is done only occasionally, and, as I believe, inconsiderately. It is done deliberately and habitually by others in the higher walks of life, who ought to set a better example. The custom is growing with our increasing wealth and luxury, and is every day becoming more fashionable, till at length, I fear, it will be considered vulgar to go to church in the afternoon, and worship God twice on the sabbath. Before considerate men give in to this practice, it becomes them to reflect on the consequences of its universal prevalence. What is the tendency, what will be the ultimate result of this habit ? The entire desertion of our churches, the desecration of the sabbath, and the overthrow of our religious institutions. The sabbath, instead of being the quietest and the holiest day in the week, will be the most disorderly and

licentious ; not merely a day of idleness and dissipation, but a day of shameless profligacy and flagrant vice. Brethren, I conjure you to pause before you give the sanction of your example to this partial and growing neglect of public worship, and to the consequent violation of the Lord's day. You must resist it at its beginning. You must withstand the earliest, the slightest encroachments on the due observance of this blessed season of rest and worship. I am not the advocate of a Jewish preciseness. I do not recommend a pharisaical punctiliousness on this subject. But I do earnestly insist upon a sober, decent, proper regard for this important institution—the most important and salutary in its influences on society, as I conceive, of all our institutions.

But it is not sufficient, my friends, that you keep holy time, and walk in company to the house of God. It is not enough that you barely give your presence here. You should attend the services of the sanctuary from right motives, and with proper feelings. Worship and instruction, prayer, praise, improvement, these are the objects that should draw you hither, and engage your thoughts whilst here. And yet is it not a lamentable fact that many come up to this holy place from sabbath to sabbath, without any very distinct and definite purpose ? They come regularly to church as a matter of course. It is a custom to which they have been habituated from their youth. The hand of maternal piety first led their infant steps to the sanctuary of God, and from that day to this the sabbath finds their eyes and their thoughts turned thitherwards. They now can give no other reason for attending, than that they have always done it, and that all other respectable people do it. They would feel uncomfortable, if they should discontinue their attendance ; it would appear so singular to act differently from one's neighbours. Besides, they expect to meet their friends and acquaintances there, and in going and returning they have an excellent opportunity to exchange polite salutations and friendly civilities.—In the composition of our best motives there will often be found

some portion of alloy. Unknown to ourselves, some little weakness, some unworthy feeling will creep in, to mar our holiest purposes. We should strive to purify our motives, and be brought to the Lord's house by those only which we should not blush openly to avow.

Brethren, you should beware that you do not go to church from a desire of entertainment, from a love of excitement, or from a spirit of curiosity. It is reasonable, that a man should wish to hear such discourses as are grounded on the religious principles which he believes to be true and scriptural. It is right, that he should desire to hear the truths of religion explained with clearness, and its obligations urged with earnestness and power. It is natural, that he should wish to meet with nothing in the language and style of the preacher that shall be at variance with those forms of expression which he has insensibly adopted from the community in which he dwells, and which he has at last brought himself to believe to be the only proper and correct vehicles of thought. It is not to be denied that the style of preaching is not only affected by the national character and manners, but is likewise tinged by the peculiarities of small communities. It varies with the degrees of refinement, of intellectual advancement, and of moral culture. Men of different modes of thinking, and in different states of cultivation, require to be addressed in different ways on the subject of religion, as on every other subject. The phlegmatic good sense of the old English divines would have been thrown away on their Gallican contemporaries, who demanded a fervid and impassioned declamation. The rant and frenzy of a fanatical field-preacher would disgust the members of a deliberative assembly. It is therefore both reasonable and necessary that this diversity of cultivation and character be regarded.

But there is danger of the hearer's requiring too much, and of the preacher's complying too far on this point. There is danger of the preacher's conforming, beyond what reason and religion permit, to the known wishes, prejudices, and tastes of the congregation he addresses. He may come to them

with the "smooth and seducing words of man's wisdom," and, in his honest purpose to consult their character and feelings, may be nourishing a very improper spirit, and a very perverse taste. We know that in the flourishing period of French literature, the Parisian nobility, wit, and fashion listened to the splendid oratory of their great preachers with precisely the same emotion with which they witnessed the representation of the finished productions of their tragedians; attended the church with the same motives and feelings with which they frequented the theatre; and returned, commenting alike on the sermon and the play, and pronouncing on each a similar sentence of approval or condemnation. Every enlightened and refined community is exposed to the same abuse of their privileges. And we should remember, my friends, that if we justly challenge for ourselves a pre-eminence in these points above other portions of our land, it is at the hazard of a like melancholy perversion. The education and intellectual character of our citizens call for a high and engaging style of pulpit address. The standard is fixed in a great degree by those among us most distinguished by their literary taste and attainments. The spirit disseminates itself through the congregation. They gradually acquire a relish for what they see universally admired by the arbiters of fashion, and at last can be satisfied with nothing, be it doctrine, precept, or motive, that is not clothed in the authorized garb, decked with the proper ornaments, and pronounced in the manner prescribed.

There is a class of persons who are emphatically "the hearers of the word"; who enter the church on the sabbath, as they do the play-house or the concert-room on the week-day, for the purpose of being excited and entertained, and whose countenances indicate, at the close of the service, that they have been sadly disappointed, if they have heard nothing novel, paradoxical, or brilliant. They are like the Jews in the days of Ezekiel, who "talked one with another at the doors of their houses, and spoke every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh from the

Lord"; because the preaching of the prophet was to them "as a very lovely song of one that had a pleasant voice." These are the wanderers among the churches, expectants by turns in every porch and on every door-stone, even following in the train of the latest or the most fashionable preacher, receiving the word with all readiness of mind, provided it only proceeds from a new mouth, or is expressed a little differently from the ordinary way. With such men, every discourse which they hear is regarded as a mere matter of taste, a subject for the exercise of their critical talents. Listen to the analysis which one of them will give you of a condemned sermon, and you will hear that the division was incomplete, the statement deficient, the illustration unsuitable, the expression inelegant, the tone harsh, and the whole manner any thing but what it ought to be. Inquire whether the doctrine was scriptural, the sentiment correct, the reasoning conclusive, and he will tell you, perhaps, that these were points which he did not attend to. There may have been much of gospel truth clothed in a plain and simple garb, and uttered in a natural and unpretending way; but then it did not arrest the attention of this lover of paradoxes and metaphors, who was looking out perpetually for something marvellous, figurative, and pretty. There may have been delivered many precepts and exhortations profitable for godly edifying; but they were lost upon this refined auditor, who thought it very indiscreet and vastly ungentle in the minister to preach upon such disagreeable and old-fashioned topics as righteousness, repentance, and judgment to come.

Men and brethren, it behooves those who exercise an influence on public sentiment and taste, to give them a right direction on this subject. It behooves us all, that we do not permit a fastidious spirit of criticism to rob us insidiously of a useful and manly exposition of the Gospel. It behooves the minister of Christ to take heed that he afford no countenance nor nourishment to this unhallowed and pernicious spirit. He should feel that that preacher deserts his duty, degrades his office,

desecrates the pulpit, who caters for the vitiated appetite of the mere literary epicure. Let him remember that his is a sacred and a responsible station.

"By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace."

The privileges of the sanctuary are too precious to be sported with; too fleeting to be neglected; too holy to be profaned. The preaching of the Gospel is not a fit subject for violent declamation, for fanciful disquisition, for the subtleties of logic, or for the prettinesses of rhetoric. The Christian preacher is not to convert the house of God into a theatre for the display of his erudition, his imagination, or his eloquence. He should feel, that the powers he possesses were given him for high and holy purposes, and that to them they should be sacredly and exclusively devoted. The talent that God has granted him, he may and should employ to make vice appear more odious, virtue more lovely, piety more attractive, and religion more reasonable. But he may not employ it, he must not employ it, to please the ear, to gratify the fancy, to exercise the ingenuity, or to raise the admiration of his hearers. Let him be plain, earnest, practical in his preaching. Let him tell his people in the most serious and tender manner, what the Scripture saith, what the Lord requireth of them, what they are to do to be saved, and he will not preach in vain. The beaming countenance, the heaving bosom, the melting eye, the suppressed sob, will all tell that he has not preached in vain. They will tell him that he has touched the delicate chord of religious feeling in the human heart; and the chord which thus readily responds in an individual's breast, shall, by the magic of sympathy, vibrate through the congregation.

Brethren, study to cultivate a spirit of candid attention and of sympathy with your minister. There are some persons who seem to think, that, when they have come to church, and seated themselves comfortably in their pews, they have done their part, all that can reasonably be required of them. They ex-

pect the preacher to perform all the rest ; to pray and worship for them ; to banish their languor, awaken their interest, and force the truths of the Gospel into their inattentive and wandering minds. Alas ! they little know the trials, the anxieties, the weakness of their minister, or they would not require of him so unreasonable, so impracticable a service. My friends, he needs all your sympathy, your attention, your co-operation. You must work with him ; you must feel for him ; or else his preaching is vain, and your hearing is also vain.

It is the duty of a Society to allow their minister time for the discharge of his several duties, particularly for the preparation of his pulpit services. He is set for the defence and inculcation of the Gospel, and he must have time to prepare himself for his task. Christianity, in order to be thoroughly understood in all its parts and relations, requires to be studied. Its evidences and its records demand and deserve a minute and patient investigation. They are capable of tasking the profoundest intellects, and such men as Newton, Grotius, and Locke, had not the vanity to imagine that, by mere intuition, they could grasp divine truth in all its vast extent. In this portion of our country, from its first settlement, we have been favored with a well-educated clergy. The ministers of the Pilgrims were accomplished scholars, educated in the best schools and universities of the old world, and well skilled in all the learning and theology of the times.* The chief object in the early establishment of our venerable University, an object which I trust will never be lost sight of amid the jejune schemes and wild projects of modern empiricism, was to perpetuate the race of intelligent and pious pastors. “CHRISTO ET ECCLESIE,” is the motto on her seal. Long may it remain there ! “After God had carried us safe to New-England,” says one of our earliest writers, “and we had builded our houses, provided necessities for our livelihood, reared

* See Baylies' Memoir of Plymouth Colony, Vol. I. pp. 312—320, for some interesting particulars of the literary and theological attainments of the first settlers.

convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government ; one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity ; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust." * At the present day there prevails a greater attention than ever to this subject. You demand an enlightened ministry. Your demand cannot be resisted. They must become so. You provide liberally for this object, establish a Divinity School, and endow professorships. You accomplish your purpose ; you raise the standard of theological attainments, and the character of your religious teachers.—The young minister, after finishing his course of preparatory studies, enters upon the active duties of his profession. He is desirous of performing them thoroughly and acceptably ; and of maintaining at the same time the character, as a theologian and a scholar, which he must possess in this community in order to be useful and respected. But he finds little or no time for study. He finds that the demands upon his time are so numerous and constant, as to allow barely space enough to prepare for his sabbath services. The alternative lies before him of sinking in his own estimation and in his ability of being useful, or of encroaching upon the hours that should be devoted to repose and recreation. The latter has generally been preferred ; and, to adopt the remark of another, " we have witnessed the terrible spectacle of men of the finest genius perishing under the slow torture of unremitted mental exertion." † Buckminster, Thacher, Abbot, these are some of the victims.

I exhort you, then, my friends, not to be unreasonable in your demands upon the time of your minister, especially during the first years of his settlement. Do not expect, that, with so extensive a charge, he can be perpetually visiting every family. Do not complain of neglect, if, from inadvertency or

* New-England's First Fruits, published in 1643.

† Professor Norton's Inaugural Discourse, p. 45.

occupation, he may omit, for a considerable interval, to visit yours in particular. Be assured that nothing but a regard to higher duties and more important engagements, will prevent him from living on terms of the greatest intimacy with his people. He will delight in going from house to house to instil good principles and deepen good impressions ; to sympathize with you in your affliction, and to rejoice with you in your prosperity ; to impart consolation to the bereaved, and to direct the thoughts of the sick and the dying to a better world. But do not think that he is idle or unprofitably employed, when he is not preaching or visiting your families. The study is his peculiar province. He is doing you as much good when he is there, as when he is in the pulpit. He must at the proper time be in each place, act in each, labor in each. Think you that the preparation of the discourse is less important than the delivery ? that you can have it without study and without thought ? You may have it ; but would you like it ? Would you not then complain, ay, and with a louder voice, and with more reason too ?

The minister, as he is to act upon and influence men, must, in some way or other, become acquainted with human nature—its principles, passions, prejudices ; the power of motives, and the indirect and imperceptible influence of circumstances ; the omnipotence of trifles, sometimes, in determining men's opinions and resolutions ; the utter impotence of miracles in cases but a little dissimilar. He must study man in books as well as in the world ; and I know not but he may study him there as well, and be as much profited by the former as by the latter. I do not altogether acknowledge the justness of the vulgar prejudice, that laborious study is incompatible with a knowledge of the world. I do not approve of this invidious array of practical men against bookish men. To be sure, you have had examples of scholars, eminent ones too, who have talked and acted as if they did not belong to this earth or to the species. But they would have been singular and eccentric anywhere, and in any pursuit. Study did not make them fools ; the

world would not have made them wise. A minister must have time allowed him to study men in both provinces, in the school of the world, and in the school of letters and philosophy. He should avail himself not only of living, but of recorded experience—"the gathered wisdom of a thousand years." There goes out from it a divine virtue, a quickening energy. It not only imparts, it elicits power. The Christian student must never be so fond of the creations of his own genius as to despise the transmitted thoughts of the wisest men of past ages. He must not be above inquiring what have been the opinions of other men on important subjects. It is the height of vanity and presumption to discard these aids, to disparage these attainments.

Finally, my friends, your minister will expect to enjoy the confidence, the sympathy, the indulgence of his people. Immersed as he will be in many cares, surrounded with perplexities and trials, he may sometimes find it necessary to resort to individuals of his flock for that counsel, encouragement, and aid, which he may often have administered to them. He will be supported and animated by knowing that you are aware of the discouragements with which he has to contend, and that you sympathize with him in his troubles. He will need your indulgence to excuse any occasional deficiency in his duties, and your candor to assign the true reasons of it, and to put a friendly construction on all his actions. Never forget that your minister is subject to the infirmities of our common nature. He may sometimes have feelings of depression or despondence which will render all exertion painful or impossible. There may be times in which bodily indisposition may render his public services languid and inefficient. There may be seasons when private griefs will weigh heavy on his heart, and embitter his soul. In cases like these he will look to you, and I know that he will not look in vain, for a considerate kindness and an affectionate sympathy.

And now, brethren, we commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up. May the

connexion this day formed, be a long, a useful, and a happy one. May your pastor be a rich blessing to you and to your children; and be made happy by the belief that you esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. Endeavour, we beseech you, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; so that whether we come and see you, or else be absent, we may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

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